A

PLAIN AND CANDID

Statement of Facts,

RESPECTING THE

NATURAL AND CIVIL

RIGHTS OF MAN,

AND THE PECULIAR

EXCELLENCIES

OF THE

British Constitution.

Καὶ ὁ σὸς πρῶτος πάλιν τεταγμένα μὲν ποιεῖ, ἃ ποιεῖ τὴν πολεί· τεταγμένα δε λαμβανει· μέτρον δὲ αὐτῶ ἐχ η᾽ ψυχη, ἀλλ᾽ ὁ νόμος ἐσίν. XEN. CYROPÆD. Page 24.

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PREFACE

THE present Publication will, in many parts, neceſſarily exhibit but few marks of originality to thoſe who have read the various writers on the Britiſh Conſtitution:—The only ambition which the Author feels is to be uſeful, and he thinks he may be eſſentially ſo at this important criſis, by arranging and bringing into one view the diverſified matter relative to the Civil and Eccleſiaſtical Polity of this Kingdom, eſpecially as the form of a Pamphlet renders the requiſite knowledge on this ſubject acceſſible to a numerous body of readers, who have no opportunity of peruſing expenſive and voluminous publications.

STATEMENT,

&c.

EVERY citizen of a free country may conſider himſelf authorized to make known his ſentiments on any ſubject that concerns the public welfare: public good involves individual proſperity; the ſoundneſs and health of the ſtate conſequently becomes an important conſideration to every one who is perſuaded that his own peace is connected with it's ſafety. Freedom of enquiry is always attended with advantage, ſince from the colliſion of ſentiments truth may be ſtruck out; but the utility derived from this freedom has, at different periods, and at a very late one, been attended with contingent evils. Falſehood, intermixed with truth and veiled under

under ſpecious appearances, has deceived many who, wanting the previous information that is neceſſary to form a juſt judgement on ſubjects of high importance, have been unable to ſeparate truth from error. In all ſtates an opinion of their being happy is eſſential to their real happineſs. Whatever can wound this opinion ought therefore moſt religiouſly to be guarded againſt. If a juſt cauſe of diſquiet exiſt, it ought to be removed; with an attention, however, to that manner of removal which may beſt conſiſt with public peace. If miſrepreſentation be the cauſe, a fair and candid ſtatement of facts will not fail of having due weight with all honeſt and impartial men, and removing ungrounded prejudices. To him who thinks he is walking on firm ground we may juſtly ſay

* *incedis per ignes*
Suppoſitos cineri doloſo.

THE inflammatory writings which, with an induſtry deſerving a better cauſe, have been circulated through the nation, have, in part, affected the public mind. We have a controverſy not only with thoſe who have delighted

* Hor. lib. 2. Od. 1. line 7.

delighted in exaggerated details, but alſo with ſuch as have aſſigned falſe cauſes of public miſery. The field of contention has been graced with combatants of no common proweſs; but paſſion and prejudice have been too apparent in many who have arranged themſelves under the adverſe banners of oppoſition and defence. Invective and panegyric, though pleaſing to a certain deſcription of men, afford no conviction to minds which are in ſearch of truth. The ſubject in diſpute ſeems to have eſcaped the notice of thoſe writers who have taken for granted that every reader knew the conſtituent parts of the government under which he lived, their reſpective powers, their mode of operation, the emergencies from which they ſprung, and the reaſons why their eſtabliſhment has been confirmed by ſucceeding ages.

It is no doubt a great compliment to every reader to ſuppoſe him acquainted with every relation of the matter in diſpute, and addreſs him as already prepared with proper information. There are times, however, in which this politeneſs may be omitted without offence. Inſtead of arbitrary deciſions, delivered

livered in a peremptory tone and commanding manner, on points which are conſidered as too well known to need explanation, ſome find it not diſpleaſing to ſee the facts ſtated with clearneſs and preciſion, and from an unbiaſſed repreſentation to form an equitable and impartial deciſion. Such is the intention of the preſent diſpaſſionate enquiry.

In defects of government an enquiry naturally ſuggeſts itſelf: do they ariſe from the conſtitution, or its adminiſtration? To confound two things ſo eſſentially diſtinct, argues ignorance or malevolence. When we ſpeak of a conſtitution, we mean "the form of the legiſlature, the rights & functions of the ſeveral parts of the legiſlative body, the conſtruction, office, and juriſdiction of the courts of juſtice." The adminiſtration is the reducing its principles into practice. If, therefore, the intervention of human paſſions have introduced grievances, is it juſt to blame the conſtitution? Speculative opinions, both novel and dangerous, have been indulged on this topic, delivered in a confuſed manner, and addreſſed to people the leaſt calculated, from their ſituation in life and limited education,

to

to diſcover their fallacy. We are told of power derived from the people, of a ſocial compact, of an original conſtitution antecedent to all government; but the people are not named, nor their compact produced, nor the conſtitution referred to. The end of all power is the happineſs of the governed, in whatever hands it may be lodged. Such was the idea which the moſt ancient nations entertained of human government.* Kings and rulers they conſidered as delegates of an Higher Power, and diſpenſing the laws in his name; obedience to which was enforced, not from perſonal fear, but an inward conviction of its rectitude. On this account we find them called

——————— † Delegates of Jove,
From whom the pow'r of laws and juſtice ſprings.

Obedience therefore appears to be a moral obligation, a duty to which we are bound as a mean of producing general happineſs, and the ſource of power—the Lord of all empire.

Let not this definition be conſtrued as favoring deſpotiſm. Sovereigns alſo and their repreſentatives

* Dion. Halicarn. Antiq. Roman. lib. 5.
† Hom. Il. lib. 1. 238 line.

repreſentatives are equally bound to regulate their conduct by the ſame unerring ſtandard—the moral law. As the happineſs of the ſubject is the foundation, ſo alſo is it the meaſure of obedience. If power be abuſed, and become deſtructive of liberty and happineſs, it is then time to aſſert the reciprocal duty of ſubjects and ſovereigns, to reſtrain the encroachments of power, and depoſit it in hands that may convert to more beneficial purpoſes, what is intended for the convenience and comfort of ſociety.

We deny the exiſtence of any compact, into which men ſolitary and unconnected entered, to form a common aſſociation for mutual protection. Hiſtory diſclaims the idea of ſuch compact, or any convention aſſembled for the purpoſe of framing a conſtitution, which always is the reſult of experience, wiſdom, ſtudy, and the habits of refined life. In the firſt ages, governments were either patriarchal, that of a parent over his family, or military, that of a captain over his fellow warriors. The laws to which mankind were ſubject in the moſt early times were few and ſimple, ſuited to the ſtate of ſimplicity that

characteriſed the paſtoral age. When the country became unequal to the ſupport of increaſing flocks and herds, the younger, and more adventurous, migrated in queſt of new habitations. Connected with each other by kindred, by religion, under the guidance of a chief, they ſettled wherever the country promiſed ſupport for their cattle. Various other ſubdiviſions took place, each under their proper leader. Such was the origin of ſtates and empires, and thus began the firſt rudiments of ſociety. When the ſtruggles of war, which was waged between neighbouring petty nations, had ceaſed, and peace had cheriſhed the neceſſary and polite arts, ſociety aſſumed a different aſpect: the citizens became new men; inſtead of tranſient occupancy, they acquired permanent poſſeſſion of lands; induſtry flouriſhed, ſcience improved the mind of the once rude warrior, and the refinement and elegance of poliſhed life ſucceeded to barbarous and rough manners. The barren privilege of wandering over a waſte was exchanged for the ſolid enjoyment of a rich, cultivated encloſure. Thus, progreſſively, aroſe heroes, ſtateſmen, poets, hiſtorians. From a few paltry cottages, encloſed with

with a mud wall, ſplendid palaces, magnificent temples reared their heads. The region of imagination was extended no leſs than the empire of reaſon, by that leiſure and eaſe which brought into action the dormant powers of the ſoul; new enjoyments were created from the cultivation of taſte; new ideas, new pleaſures, beautified the days of man: but, in ſo poliſhed a ſtate of ſociety, the mutual relations of men became more complicate; laws therefore ſuited to ſuch variety were framed by the enlightened wiſdom of that age. As man in ſociety is not an inſulated being, but connected with individuals of the ſame ſpecies, the rights he claims muſt be ſuch as are conſiſtent with the ſafety of the community, and eventually of himſelf. A whole is formed by the implied conſent of all which is to provide for the ſecurity of its parts, and theſe in return are reciprocally bound to protect and confirm the ſupreme power, whoſe office it is to enact laws and enforce obſervance.

WHATEVER contributes to the rational enjoyment of life, all the advantages and all the pleaſures of ſociety, are derived from the

progreſſive improvement of thoſe intellectual powers, whoſe extenſive operation cannot but excite admiration; for if we penetrate to the moſt remote period of ſociety, where expreſs revelation has not anticipated the ſlow and gradual progreſs to civilization, we are preſented with no pleaſing picture of human nature. The wild ſavage roaming over the foreſts, or ſearching the lakes for his precarious ſubſiſtence, appears but little removed from the animals he is purſuing. His underſtanding uncultivated, and his ſenſibility unawakened, he is a ſtranger to thoſe pleaſing emotions which ſpring from the moſt tender engagements that can be formed among the human ſpecies. No alternate hopes and fears agitate the mind, no delightful anticipations of happineſs precede the lover's attainment of the object of his wiſhes. Ignorant of the delicate diſtreſſes and enjoyments of love, unrefined by any of thoſe elegant ſentiments which in an enlightened age are derived from that paſſion, he ſeizes on the victim of his undiſcerning appetite as his ſlave or captive, to be employed as his drudge in the moſt ſervile and laborious taſks, and treated in every reſpect as his inferior. His children

are

are equally in danger of feeling the dreadful effects that may follow the ſudden ebullitions of his reſentment,—and of being expoſed, or ſold, or murdered, as caprice may direct. His rights, ſo much the ſubject of boaſting, his wild independence, are the conſequence of his wretchedneſs. No advantages can reſult from the reſtraint of government to thoſe who have nothing to defend; but when the once torpid ſavage is rouſed to action by new motives, when new principles and new habits are ſuperinduced by the poſſeſſion of property and a regular ſupply of his wants, he feels the neceſſity of a protecting hand to ſecure what he has acquired.

We ſee, therefore, that all civil rights and their due regulation muſt neceſſarily be conſiderations poſterior to the eſtabliſhment of ſociety, for prior to this period they are unknown.

Every conſtitution which we read of has been the work of time; local circumſtances, or peculiar emergencies, or the influence of ſome ſuperior genius accommodating his ſyſtem to the cuſtoms and manners of his countrymen,

trymen, have given riſe to various forms. On a comparative review of theſe we ſhall not heſitate to declare that to be the moſt perfect which retains the greateſt poſſible ſhare of natural rights, ſuch as belong to a man when he comes out of the hands of his Creator, with no reſtraint but what is for the public good.

Let us not, however, wander in the dark, and ſpeak of rights without defining their nature and full extent. Theſe rights may be reduced to three—ſecurity of life, of perſon, of property.

Preservation of life is the firſt law of nature; but in a rude ſtate of ſociety, where no fixed laws regulate the human conduct, it is expoſed to the caprice or revenge of any individual. In the days of our Gothic anceſtors, a fine was deemed a ſufficient compenſation for the life of a man; but the Engliſh laws are peculiarly jealous in this reſpect; for of them, and their comparative excellence, the preſent occaſion leads us to ſpeak. Not only the conſequences of external violence, but of extreme indigence, are vigilantly

vigilantly guarded againſt by the ſame humanity which extends its care to health of body and peace of mind, puniſhing every attempt to injure the former or wound the latter.

NEITHER can any Engliſhman be ignorant of the careful vigilance which preſerves the perſonal liberty of every individual from the abuſe of authority, or private malevolence. Freedom is his natural birth-right; a man is then free when he feels himſelf perfectly ſafe from the injury of another: This is liberty, and who dares aſſert that an Engliſhman poſſeſſes it not in the moſt extenſive ſenſe?

HIS property alſo is equally ſacred with his perſon; all his rights are preciſely aſcertained and ſtrictly protected, and of none can he be deprived but by the judgement of his peers, or the law of the land. Any ſudden violence offered to his perſon, which admits of no appeal to public authority, may be repelled by force of arms, and the aggreſſor deſtroyed with impunity in ſelf-defence.

FREEDOM of mind alſo is ſecured to the ſubject; he may worſhip God in what manner ſoever his conſcience dictates without moleſtation or interruption: he may publiſh whatever ſentiments he chooſes, with no other reſtraint but that of public decorum and public ſafety. Neither are theſe rights defended by a mere dead letter; the courts of juſtice are open to aſcertain and protect them; the limited authority of the King; the privileges of Parliament, where virtually reſide the people ſpeaking by their repreſentatives; all tend to maintain and regulate theſe abſolute rights of individuals, this political freedom.

FREEDOM is the very aim of our conſtitution: for a conſtitution we have, not only moſt excellent, but moſt ancient. The woods* of Germany were the ſeat, the German warriors the original framers, of what has ever been and ſtill remains the pride of Britons, the admiration of foreign nations, the ſtudy of the learned, and the love of thoſe who feel its benefits, tho' ignorant, perhaps, of the ſource of their happineſs. The final arrangement and perfection ſuited to the then exiſting

* Tac. de mor. German, c. 11.

exiſting ſtate of ſociety was made by Alfred, whoſe internal diſpoſitions of policy were ſo admirably adapted to promote the peace and good order of ſociety; * "ſo profound a tranquillity and ſuch perfect ſecurity were eſtabliſhed over all the land, that if a traveller left or loſt ever ſo great a ſum of money in the open fields or highways, he was ſure of finding it next morning, or even a month after, entire and untouched." The feudal tyranny of the Normans defaced this beautiful fabric; the ſubtleties and caſuiſtry of the Norman lawyers deſtroyed the ſalutary ſimplicity that prevailed in the diſtributive juſtice of the Saxons: but the feudal ſyſtem is faſt vaniſhing away, and thoſe who ſit in the ſeat of juſtice have ſhewn every diſpoſition to remedy the evils of Norman intricacy, and thoſe unhappy refinements which afforded room for the exerciſe of ingenuity, but advanced not the cauſe of equity and truth. The reſtoration of this ancient conſtitution has engaged the patriotiſm of every age, from the days of William the Conqueror to thoſe of William the Reſtorer. The entreaties made uſe of by the Londoners to

* Hen. Hiſt. Eng. vol. 3, p. 337.

Matilda, during her ſhort poſſeſſion of the throne, for the revival of Edward the Confeſſor's laws, the extorting from John the charter of liberties, the firm oppoſition made by the barons to the introduction of the Roman laws,* evinced a fondneſs of the ancient conſtitution, and a deſire to meliorate it by paring away the excreſcencies of later days, and preventing further encroachments. When the commons ſucceeded the barons in the honourable but arduous poſt of defending liberty, the motives were the ſame: the ſame principles were preſerved, although requiring a different modification, agreeable to that change which time had produced among the different orders of ſociety. Whatever fluctuation the conſtitution may have experienced muſt be attributed to the varying ſtate of ſociety, not to the changeable diſpoſition of its inherent principles. A body of reſpectable intelligent citizens, rendered independent by commerce and induſtry, claimed a ſhare of that power which the king and barons formerly divided; their importance in moſt eſſentially promoting the welfare and riches of the ſtate juſtified the claim. A mind exerciſed in

* *Nolumus leges Angliæ mutari.*

in the field of enquiry, enlarged and enlightened by education, enabled them to define and practically apply thoſe inherent principles of the conſtitution which had been leſt ambiguous by former parliaments: theſe principles we can now unfold; we are at length able accurately to define the ſeveral conſtituent parts of our government, with their reſpective powers and privileges, which, aſcertained by the wiſdom of many ages, form the broadeſt poſſible baſis for public proſperity, and order, and ſecurity. Such are the genuine fruits of that tree of liberty which is planted in the garden of England, whoſe inhabitants, like the fabled dragons in the Heſperian gardens, guard its golden fruit with ſleepleſs vigilance and invincible courage.

THE qualities that lay the firmeſt foundation for the happineſs of ſociety are three—wiſdom, goodneſs and power: theſe are indiſſoluble, and, like ſoul and body, exiſt not ſeparately; for individually they cannot produce public good—the aim of every well-regulated government. There muſt be wiſdom to diſcern what is beneficial to the community, goodneſs to purſue its real intereſt,

and power to execute whatever may be deemed efficient to its furtherance and improvement. Theſe principles not only form the ſpirit, but are embodied in the Britiſh conſtitution. Men of information in their ſeveral ſtations and profeſſions, improved by education, are elected by the people, from among themſelves, to form the houſe of commons, that great aſſembly of the nation, which, from being compoſed of men ſkilled in the laws, and experienced in varied wiſdom, was by our Saxon anceſtors emphatically termed wittena-gemote "the meeting of wiſe men." An union of wiſdom and goodneſs is thus formed, as far as human means can provide; and, leſt the intentions of promoting the public good ſhould lead them into any haſty or imprudent meaſures, a mediatorial body is appointed, the lords, ſpiritual and temporal, conſiſting of perſons ſelected for their wiſdom, their valour, their property, to watch over the reſpective rights of ſovereign and people, and preſerve the due balance of the three conſtituent parts of the government; they are deſigned to check, by their prudence and caution, any irregular meaſures that might be adopted from the prevalence

prevalence of popular enthuſiaſm, eventually deſtructive of that liberty, whoſe intereſts it profeſſed to defend. That energy, ſtrength and deſpatch may give life and being to the united counſels of wiſdom and goodneſs thus moderated, the execution is veſted in a ſingle perſon; by which proviſion all the advantages of a deſpotic monarchy are obtained without its evils. Secreſy and diſpatch are the life of power, and on this account the Britiſh conſtitution inveſts the king with the executive authority; he himſelf alſo forms part of the legiſlature, that by his negative voice he may prevent any encroachment on that power whoſe uninterrupted exertion is abſolutely requiſite for the well-being of the ſtate. To prevent any tyrannical uſe of ſuch great privileges, the miniſters and counſellors of the King are reſponſible for any abuſe, any arbitrary exertion of them that may be made. No enterpriſe could be undertaken without counſellors to adviſe, or miniſters to execute. The conſtitution, therefore, wiſely orders that the inſtruments of power ſhould be anſwerable for any miſchief that may ariſe from its being illegally exerted, not the auguſt head of the ſtate,

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the ſacredneſs of whoſe perſon is neceſſary to ſecure that independence which is inſeparably annexed to the ſeveral parts of the conſtitution. Whilſt the ſupreme head of the ſtate is thus perſonally protected, for reaſons the moſt wiſe and juſt, every meaſure hoſtile to the intereſts of the people is guarded againſt by lodging in their repreſentatives the moſt important power of withholding ſupplies, the ſinews of Government. But "the King," our law ſays, "can do no wrong," and moſt juſtly, for his power extends not to injure; prevent he may, he cannot commit injuſtice; his very exiſtence is for the good of his people;—the law to which he is ſubject has appointed him for this purpoſe, and he acts and ſpeaks but by law.* Whoever affirms he can deſignedly and ſecurely do wrong commits treaſon againſt his country. Such an idea deſtroys that perfection which the conſtitution ſuppoſes to be an inſeparable part of its king; all his counſels, all his deliberations, are for the good of his people, who, in return, pay him that veneration and reſpect which are due to benevolence ever watching, ever promoting their intereſts. The

* *Nihil enim aliud poteſt rex, niſi id ſolum quod de jure poteſt.* Bl. Com. vol. 1.

THE king, in his political capacity, for of that we are to be underſtood as ſpeaking, not only is all perfect, but immortal; he never dies. The natural king may ceaſe to live; the political never. * "Henry, Edward, or George, may die; but the king ſurvives them all."

NOTHING can be imagined more conducive than this wiſe proviſion to the preſervation of peace and order in the ſtate; for in caſe of natural death, or civil from abdication, or any other cauſe, there is no diſſolution of government, no return to a ſtate of anarchy, where all would be equal and at liberty to chooſe a new form. The political king ſtill exiſts, and the crown is transferred in the uſual courſe of ſucceſſion to the next heir, or in the latter caſe conferred on him who engages to diſcharge all thoſe duties that are annexed to royalty; and to avoid the intolerable evils of popular election, the choice of the proper perſon, under proper reſtrictions, is veſted in the lords and commons, whoſe wiſdom and prudence were exemplified on the abdication of James; not only in aſſerting and

* Black. Com. vol. 1, ch. 7, p. 249.

and claiming, but ſecuring the rights and liberties of the people of this kingdom.

As the Engliſh reverence their king, from ſimilar motives they are led to reſpect the nobility, who have co-exiſted with the conſtitution, and can only fall with it. Regular ſubordination in ſociety promiſes far more ſecurity and harmony than where either all are equal, or the riſe from low to high is ſudden, without any intermediate diſtinctions. The gradual aſcent from the loweſt in ſociety to the ſupreme head, exhibits more beauty, and concentres in itſelf more ſolidity, than where no diſtinctions are made, no objects of emulation are held forth to rouſe the latent powers of the mind. If the qualities obſervable in the divine government, wiſdom, goodneſs, power, form the baſis of our conſtitution, why ſhould not the ſuperſtructure be erected in imitation of the ſame model? Men eſſentially differ both in the intellectual and active powers of the mind; this difference never would have exiſted but to ſerve ſome good deſign. We certainly obſerve, both from hiſtory and daily experience, that men are deſirous of being led; they naturally range themſelves

themſelves under the banner of ſuperiority, whether in ſcience, or arts, or arms. To direct the ambition of aſpiring men into the proper channel, and make it ſubſervient to the public good, will be allowed highly meritorious. If the good of the community be promoted by motives of emulation that add nothing to its burthens, the plan is ſurely admirable: honorary diſtinctions are of this kind, and coſt ſociety nothing; moreover, a man adorned with the inſignia of merit is the better enabled, from that natural reſpect which is paid to rank when poſſeſſed of its appropriate virtues, to do his country ſervice. A man may be ſatiated with riches, which now no longer offer any inducement to encounter dangers and fatigues; another motive is then applied—diſtinction from his fellow-citizens, as a reward of ſuper-eminent virtue. Such a mark of his country's acknowledgement cannot, it is ſuppoſed, fail of intereſting the feelings of a noble mind; yet this may fail; honours that die with him, perhaps, have no attraction for a man who has paſſed the vigour of his life, and learnt to deſpiſe empty diſtinctions; yet regard for his children may induce him to do, on their account,

what he would not do on his own: a perpetuity, therefore, is decreed; his children are to inherit the well-earned honours, which are to remain durable memorials of a father's love.

On theſe principles the Britiſh conſtitution appoints hereditary rewards for her moſt deſerving ſervants. The titles in themſelves are of no importance, their value ariſes from the preſumption of their being the reward of merit, and when this merit ceaſes, they become a mere *caput mortuum*, a mere ſhadow, a mere nothing. Hereditary honours addreſs the nobleſt principles of human nature, they call upon the deſcendant of illuſtrious anceſtors to emulate their virtues, and not to obſcure by depraved paſſions and vile actions the luſtre of his yet unſullied family. As ſhame and infamy are more efficacious in certain crimes than corporal puniſhments, ſo ſuch motives cannot but weigh more with generous minds than any mercenary conſiderations, which, however ſtimulating, leave ſome tinge of their baſe origin in the mind. The paſſion for fame and perſonal diſtinction has been ſucceſsfully addreſſed in every age, and

and every country; and the teſtimony which all nations have borne to the beneficial effects which ſuitable motives applied to this paſſion have produced, adds much to the weight and authority of thoſe arguments which are brought to prove the neceſſity of continuing honorary diſtinctions: but merited odium fall on that depraved character who, receiving tranſmitted honours, not only fails in that perſonal merit which firſt attracted ſuch ſignal diſtinction from a grateful country, but makes them ſubſervient to the purpoſes of fraud, iniquity, violence, oppreſſion, corruption. The more ſplendid his anceſtors, the more debaſed the unworthy, the degenerate offspring.

THE lords are called, by our conſtitution, hereditary counſellors of the crown; not from their conſiſting of the ſame families, and their deſcendants, but from their filling that rank which calls them to aſſiſt the king with their deliberations. We are to underſtand this heritable privilege and power of giving counſel in the ſame ſenſe with the immortality of the king; in their political capacities they remain the ſame, and their

office the ſame; their natural perſons are continually changing: they are the pillars of the crown, and they fall together;—when England, in the time of Cromwell, was changed into a republic, the houſe of lords was voted uſeleſs. If we wiſh to preſerve our preſent form of government, we neceſſarily muſt be anxious to preſerve this ariſtocratic part of our conſtitution, raiſed from the body of the people as a bulwark againſt popular encroachments; for to this noble houſe a road is opened from every quarter: whatever is eſtimable in learning, whatever is dignified by great and noble achievments, whatever can attract the admiration of man in ſociety, has had place in this ſeat of honour and reſpect. We could enumerate a liſt of worthies who have reflected luſtre on their country, and rendered the name of Britain immortal. Eminent ſtation ever attracts envy, and the leaſt failings in ſo conſpicuous a ſituation too often are ſwelled into glaring enormities by the magnifying eye of malicious diſcontent. Becauſe ſome have, perhaps, undeſervedly obtained ſuch diſtinctions, and ſome diſgrace their inheritance, ought we to conclude the whole body corrupt, involve

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all in indiſcriminate cenſure, and endanger the very vitals of our conſtitution by cheriſhing invidious ſuſpicions of thoſe who have no other fault but ſuperior elevation? Many, it cannot be denied, diſgrace their rank by vicious indulgencies; many appear to whom the obſervation of Juvenal is applicable—

* "*Indignus genere, et præclaro nomine tantum*
"*Inſignis*;"

yet we find the ſame corruption, ſo much complained of in riches, unadorned with title, without its delicacy of ſentiment and dignity of manners. We find alſo more pride in thoſe who affect than thoſe who fill an high ſtation. Many, in comparatively a low ſituation, aſſume, with no ſmall degree of arrogance, conſequence over their fellow-citizens, and contend anxiouſly for diſtinction, which thoſe in whom the claim is juſt and inherent diſcover only by ſuperior courteſy, affability and beneficence.

THE moſt excellent proviſions may and often are wreſted by the depraved paſſions of men to the moſt deſtructive ends; but in whatever horrid ſhapes ariſtocracy may have appeared

* Sat. 8. lib. 3. line 31.

appeared in other countries, according to the fundamental laws of this it can appear only in a mild and benignant form; for it is not, as has been ſuggeſted, the monſter which devours the younger children for the aggrandiſement of the elder. The continuance of this ariſtocratic part of our conſtitution, as well as all other good families, is wiſely, and, we truſt, juſtly provided for by entails. Whoever by abilities, by ingenuity, by induſtry, has raiſed himſelf to eminence, is deemed worthy the attention of the community; an attention not confined to himſelf, but to be extended to his family. Whatever reſpect talents and merit deſervedly claim and receive from philoſophic minds, yet the multitude are not alive to ſentiments of this nature. In civil ſociety, homage is paid to property; our conſtitution, therefore, deems it juſt to enrobe merit in that garb which may enſure the attention of the world, ever inclined to judge from externals, and by them to regulate the meaſure of reſpect. The poſſeſſion of that power and limited hereditary influence which are annexed to landed property, proves a great ſtimulus to ſkill and induſtry in thoſe ſeveral branches which are the ſources of national

tional proſperity. The inducement is rendered ſtill ſtronger by enabling the parent to ſecure the poſſeſſion to his family, and prevent, for a certain period, the diſſipating the hard earnings of patient induſtry by luxury and profuſion; but the protection afforded by the law for this purpoſe, is confined within certain bounds, that the fluctuation of property may ſerve as a ſpur to the abilities of others: whilſt thoſe who are ſo inclined may ſhield their offspring from the poſſible effects of vice and folly, others may follow the determinations of their own judgment, and make ſuch diviſion of their property as ſhall appear moſt conducive to their children's welfare. It, perhaps, may be a conſideration not altogether unimportant—whether a diviſion, which makes it barely poſſible for all the children to live without induſtry, would not be more prejudicial to the intereſts of the community, by engendering indolence and pride, with a formidable train of their attending evils, than the diſcretionary power allowed the parent of aſſiſting the exertions of his younger children by ſuch proviſion as will bring them, if they are not wanting to themſelves, to a level with their elder brother.

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The exercise of those talents which a man has received from nature, is the only road to eminence; and an employment which suffers not the powers of his mind to stagnate, commonly renders him happy. The public good also is promoted by the same means which secure the interests and happiness of the individual; for society derives great advantages from the engagement of the younger branches of good families in professions. They are to be supposed, from superior education, to have principles of honour instilled into them, abhorrent of that low cunning and interested avarice which so much disgrace those in whom they are found, and occasion so much evil.

When, therefore, a torrent of abuse is poured forth against high stations, and an eager desire displayed of levelling all distinctions, it is incumbent on every considerate man to weigh well the propriety and utility of such distinctions. Prudence suggests also the necessity of examining the motives by which those are actuated who, with unrestrained severity, condemn every mark of distinction in society. We may concede much

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to the prejudices of thoſe who are induced, from partial abuſe, to inveigh againſt the whole order, and involve the inſtitution itſelf in that cenſure which is due only to its abuſe; but if we imagine enlarged ideas of the public good to be the uniform principle of marked and active oppoſition to ſuperior rank, we ſhall ſuffer ourſelves to fall into a deluſion, the more inexcuſable, becauſe hiſtory and experience unite in evincing its fallacy. In diſcovering the cauſe, we muſt have recourſe to the various paſſions that agitate the human breaſt; the love of power, which more or leſs reigns in every man, the deſire of extending their own ſphere of action by breaking down thoſe barriers which repreſs its exertion, envy, diſcontent, impatience of inferiority, diſappointed ambition, and an eagerneſs to bring to light thoſe talents which they think unworthily obſcured and neglected. It will be difficult to imagine humility poſſeſſing the leaſt ſhare in that eagerneſs to demoliſh the ornamental ſtructure of ſociety; for pride no where reſides more pre-eminent than in the breaſt of republicans, who, by public and private conduct, prove the quarrel to be not about power, but its exertion. We do not

find any who preach the doctrine of levelling up; and in a caſe of this kind a very ſerious difficulty occurs—At what point is the levelling down to ſtop? For ſurely it cannot be denied by a leveller that a beggar has the ſame claim to diſtinction with his brethren who complain of their obſcurity; and we find every man in a confuſion of ranks making his own profeſſion and ſtation the true ſtandard of diſtinction in ſociety.

But, without dwelling on ſuch abſurdities, we may obſerve that the Britiſh conſtitution forms a perfect political rule, to which the diſpoſitions of men muſt be accommodated; it changes not with varying faſhions, nor bends to the obliquity of the times. It contains every ingredient neceſſary to produce the happineſs of individuals, which we call public good: it concentres in itſelf the virtue of the democratic, the wiſdom of the ariſtocratic, and the power of the monarchic form: By a mutual check their reſpectively-peculiar evils are precluded. Self-intereſt is the ruling principle of man: the provident wiſdom of our conſtitution has made it ſubſervient to the public good. Whilſt all are conſulting their own

own private views, they are compelled, by means of a ſuperior power, to promote the intereſts of the community. Their ſeveral intereſts, however mutually adverſe and inimical, unite in impelling forward the machine of government. Party contentions animate and ſtrengthen the cauſe of freedom, which is never ſo near degenerating into ſlavery as when all parties coaleſce and all oppoſitions ceaſe: it is the deep ſleep of freedom which precedes its death.

WHAT can be produced from antiquity ſimilar or comparable to this ſyſtem, the varied excellencies of which we muſt ſtudy in order to underſtand, and to underſtand is to admire? Will you bring in competition the military republic of Sparta, or the commercial one of Athens, which indeed exiſted whilſt their manners remained uncorrupted; but when they became depraved, the government, radically defective, increaſed the corruption? the ſenate conſulted, but the people ruled; they made the laws, they acquitted or condemned the criminal on an appeal to them, according to the caprice of the preſent moment: their beſt generals and moſt eminent

men were baniſhed or impriſoned on the ſlighteſt ſuſpicion, or the leaſt misfortune that attended their arms. That ſudden heat and temerity, thoſe infirmities, follies, and vices, which public conventions are liable to, equally with private men, were attended with deplorable evils; for there was no barrier to repreſs the fury of popular prejudice and enthuſiaſm. The people, intoxicated with power and licentious from freedom, converted the public revenues to the ſupport of theatrical and other diverſions, making it capital for any one to propoſe their application to other affairs, however neceſſary. Ever guided by the impulſe of paſſion, they were directed in all po-political matters by their orators: eloquence and wiſdom are not always united, and very raſh meaſures were frequently adopted from the effect of an empaſſioned harangue. Their orators were bribed; and then their laws, their government, and their licentious freedom, fell together.

Even when Rome became a republic, the perpetual ſtruggles between the patricians and plebeians were the cauſe of perpetual diſſentions. The ſtate, like the waves of the ocean,

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was in perpetual motion: when the patricians prevailed, power leaned too much to a partial preference of their own body; when the people obtained the whole direction of the ſuffrages, to the excluſion of ſenatorial wiſdom and patrician influence, they became a ready prey to thoſe ambitious leaders, Marius, Sylla, Cæſar, who made uſe of them as inſtruments to enſlave their country.

THE aim of all good governments ſhould be, to prevent power from degenerating into tyranny, and liberty into licentiouſneſs. Happy that ſtate, where the laws provide againſt the exceſſes of each, where all may do what good they pleaſe, and none are permitted to injure or oppreſs their fellow-citizens!

EXPERIENCED conviction of the evils neceſſarily reſulting from each diſtinct form, or the imperfect combination hitherto known, made Cicero pronounce that to be the moſt perfect poſſible form of government "in which the power of the king, nobles, and people, were duly blended;"* which, although perfect

* Frag. Cic. de rep. lib. 2.

perfect in theory, was deemed impoſſible in practice: "it was more," Tacitus obſerves, "to be commended than likely to be put in execution, and even, if reduced to practice, promiſing no long continuance." * The duration of the Britiſh Conſtitution has evinced theſe theoretical ſpeculations to be moſt juſt, and their practical expediency moſt admirable; but Sparta, Athens, Rome, exiſt only in the annals of time, and, as all human affairs have their periods of growth and decay, the Britiſh conſtitution, we are told, muſt fall. The corruption of parliament will be its final ruin; "it will periſh," ſays Monteſquieu, "when the legiſlative power ſhall be more corrupted than the executive."† But the inherent principles of the conſtitution have provided a remedy againſt ſuch poſſible event; it will not periſh with the corruption of parliament, the people of England themſelves, in their collective capacity, muſt firſt ſeal their own ruin ere it be complete; for if the parliament, who are only their repreſentatives entruſted with a certain authority for a certain end, ſhould be found abuſing

* Tac. lib. 4.

† Sp. Laws, lib. 2. c. 6.

abuſing the truſt repoſed in them, and wreſting it to the deſtruction of that liberty which their duty obliges them to protect—the people poſſeſs an indefeaſable right of reſuming the power ſo abuſed, and placing it in the hands of other delegates, who may be more worthy of ſo precious a depoſit.

INSTITUTIONS, which if they do not reach yet approach to perfection, ought to be guarded with the moſt religious precaution. The neceſſity of this vigilance ſtrikes the mind very forcibly when we read the hiſtory of paſt ages, which places this truth in the moſt conſpicuous point of view. The grand difference between riſing and falling nations, the conquering and the conquered, has been manners, and theſe have been formed by the eſtabliſhed laws and government: when the Perſians under Cyrus overthrew the Aſſyrian monarchy, their ſuperiority was owing to virtuous manners, which, inculcated by a proper education, taught them ſubordination, fidelity, diſcipline, courage. We know, indeed, that their loins were girded for the race of victory by a divine hand; but they were prepared for the important purpoſe of being

being inſtruments for effecting the deſigns of Providence by a regular and ſtrict courſe of diſcipline: at this period they lived under a form of government very ſimilar to our own.*

A SYSTEM ſo admirably adapted to promote happineſs, ſo provident of its continuance, has not, with all theſe advantages, eſcaped the malevolence of enemies, who, ſtudious of effecting their ſecret deſigns, purpoſely confound the conſtitution with its adminiſtration. They impute the abuſes which ariſe from the intervention of human paſſions to the conſtitution itſelf, and exert every nerve to change its form, not conſidering that ſuch change by no means attacks the ſource of evil, only its appearance. The corruption of all governments neceſſarily follows the corruption of morals; here lies the fatal ſource of every ill that afflicts the human race: Heal the ulcers and putrifying ſores that excruciate and contaminate the mind, and all will be well. The beſt conſtitution will then be the beſt adminiſtered. In the decline of all ſtates, the deſtruction is inevitable when corruption has infected the body

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* Cyropæd. lib. 1. page 24.

of the people; all the uſeful and ornamental arts, all the conveniences, elegancies, and refinements of life, flow from the induſtry and ingenuity of the lower orders. The ſtate derives its inſtruments of defence from theſe, in whom the phyſical ſtrength of government may be ſaid to reſide—preſervation in war, proſperity in peace; but the peace of ſociety depends on good order, good order on obedience, and obedience on dutiful ſubmiſſion to thoſe who are appointed rulers for our good. Every friend to true liberty cannot but execrate thoſe who endeavoured to ſubvert the conſtitution by corrupting the minds of the lower orders, the foundation of ſociety; thus involving their country in civil war, murders, aſſaſſinations, and every horrid evil that ariſes from the violence of miſguided paſſion. Many, no doubt, ſhrink with horrour from ſuch an idea, and abhor the end though aiding the means: but who can foretell the event of civil diſſentions and private animoſities? Are we not juſtified in dreading the moſt horrid complication of human calamities, from what is ſtill paſſing in a neighbouring country? And what could ſooner produce them than the meaſures lately

adopted by an ambiguous deſcription of men? Clubs inſtituted amongſt mechanics and labourers, ſeditious pamphlets diſtributed, fraught with abuſive and diſtorted miſrepreſentations of the conſtitution, of men of high rank, and of public meaſures. If principles deſtructive of all ſubordination be inſtilled into minds at all times more ready to receive bad than good impreſſions; if they are taught, that the evils they feel originate ſolely from the form of government, and the tyranny and oppreſſion of their ſuperiors, can we imagine they will reſt contented? or rather, will they not try every means, even the moſt violent, to remove grievances which, although inſeparably annexed to that condition of life, they are taught to conſider as perſonal, and removable by pulling down thoſe ranks whoſe greatneſs is founded on their miſery? The falſehood of ſuch remarks is too apparent to need refutation. A great man can do nothing more than eat and drink; the ſuperfluity of his fortune goes to the maintenance of others; the luxuries he may indulge in give bread to numbers. If he diſplay ſplendour in carriages, in equipage, in edifices, they are the ſeveral channels through which his money flows,

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and promotes induſtry, the beſt mode of diſtributing property and relieving the indigent; and comparative indigence muſt neceſſarily exiſt, that the various purpoſes of ſociety may be anſwered. There muſt be hewers of wood and drawers of water, men adapted for every menial, every laborious, ſervice, that comforts and conveniencies, unknown in a ſtate of nature, may be found in civilized life. They who are employed in the lower offices of ſociety, if ſupplied with food and raiment, enjoy means of happineſs in no reſpect inferior to what the higher ranks poſſeſs, whoſe ſphere of action is more enlarged, and whoſe cares are greater. Great inequality, indeed, extreme poverty, and exceſſive riches, are evils which require to be ſoftened. The taxes, which in this country are levelled at riches, ſeem to have this object in view, checking luxury at the ſame time that they contribute to the revenue of the ſtate. The enormous ſums annually collected throughout the kingdom, are calculated to do away, as much as poſſible, the diſtreſſes of the poor. Superadded to political regulations, the humanity extended to misfortune by individuals is proverbial, and the munificence diſplayed

in the various aſylums for affliction in its different forms, fills every foreigner with aſtoniſhment. " Ye have the poor always with you " was the obſervation of him who beſt knew the conſtitution of man, and every poſſible relation in which he could ſtand; and the poor we have, and for the wiſeſt reaſons muſt have, till the œconomy of nature ſhall be exchanged for a new diſpenſation. Frugality, induſtry, and temperance, will bring thoſe who now complain of their hard fate, or lay a foundation for bringing their poſterity, if perſevering in the ſame courſe of virtues, to a level with the preſent objects of envy. Numberleſs examples of their ſucceſs may be ſeen in thoſe intermediate links of ſociety, the middle ranks, who have attained a competence, by honeſt induſtry, beneficial to themſelves and advancing the welfare of their country. Many alſo are riſing, as many whoſe anceſtors were obſcure and ignoble have riſen, to the firſt orders in the ſtate by continued labour and diligence. The moſt eminent men England can boaſt of in the preſent day have not reached their elevated ſtation without great and repeated exertion of ſplendid abilities; neither are thoſe who

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move in a higher ſphere of life to be conſidered as mere drones, fattening on the ſpoils of their anceſtors. There is one view, amongſt others, in which they appear not only the ornament, but the ſtrength of ſociety, reſembling thoſe exquiſitely-finiſhed columns in a building, which ſtrike the eye of the beholder with their beauty, and at the ſame time are its firmeſt ſupport. It is a view almoſt peculiar to England, and which a philoſophic mind contemplates with the higheſt ſatisfaction. When amuſement and the public good are made to coincide, we muſt acknowledge that the mind has received an happy turn, and its activity moſt worthily employed. Perhaps ſome may anticipate our reflections, and ſee we allude to theſe agricultural engagements, which have been proſecuted with a noble zeal by very diſtinguiſhed characters: ſcience has been brought out of the duſt of the ſchools, and made to walk with men in the humbler paths of life; ſhe does more now than amuſe the ſpeculative, and her fair form is enrobed in a veſture which delights the eye, and gives bread to multitudes.

We may juſtly ſay that a reſident nobility and gentry are of the utmoſt importance to public happineſs, not only by the aſſiſtance which humanity prompts them to beſtow on the neceſſitous, but by the improvement of agriculture, which forms a permanent ſource of riches to every country. The riches derived from commerce cannot properly be ſaid to belong to a country till they appear in a new form, in edifices, in improving and directing the fertility of the ſoil. They then may be ſaid to have made a durable habitation. Towns, once celebrated for their wealth, acquired by commerce, at this day ſhew not the leaſt veſtige of their former opulence ; even their ſituation is a matter of doubt. But riches depoſited in an highly cultivated and much improved ſoil have been ſtationary, and never affected but by the continued depredations of barbarous nations for a century or two together. Notwithſtanding Antwerp, Ghent, Bruges, totally loſt their great commerce by the civil wars in Flanders and the Spaniſh government, yet the ſource of riches formed by agriculture has never been dried up. " Flanders continues to this day one of the richeſt, beſt cultivated, and

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moſt populous provinces of Europe."* Conſequently the revenue derived from this ſource muſt be ſteady and durable, unaffected by thoſe changes which commerce experiences. A nobleman, or gentleman, who cultivates part of his eſtate, is highly inſtrumental in procuring this inexhauſtible treaſure of ſolid, and in every reſpect beneficial, riches: he employs a greater capital than his tenant, and can afford to try a variety of experiments; if they fail, his loſs is not material, if they ſucceed, the whole country receives the benefit. He is enabled, by extenſive correſpondence, to fetch ſeeds from every quarter of the globe ſuited to the particular ſoil of each diſtrict, increaſing by theſe means the quantity of food, and conſequently leſſening the price of meat. His example unfetters the minds of the neighbouring farmers from thoſe prejudices which they ſo univerſally entertain againſt new modes of cultivation; his countenance of the moſt ingenious raiſes a ſpirit of emulation, which, aided by ſuperior practical ſkill, produces further improvement. We are aware that owners may engage too extenſively in farming their

* See Smith's Wealth of Nat. b. 3. p. 137.

their own eſtates, and encourage a race of idle and diſſolute bailiffs, inſtead of induſrious and ſober tenants; but the beautifying and improving the face of the country is undoubtedly owing to the reſidence of thoſe true patriots, who ſpend the money, deſtined by others for the purpoſes of vice and folly, in promoting the welfare of the community. Indiſcriminate abuſe, therefore, of characters who fill a ſtation of life which has not been acquired but by much perſonal exertion, either in themſelves or anceſtors, ought to be received with the moſt ſuſpicious caution. The deſtruction, indeed, of every thing that is reſpectable and excellent is the natural conſequence of that levelling principle, which is too favorable to the deſigns of the abandoned and profligate not to be boldly avowed. We diſdain an anſwer to ſuch who have even thought of an equal diviſion of property, which would call for a new diſtribution whenever the majority became, from indolence or vicious purſuits, the poor, and be an annihilation of induſtry.

THOSE who recommend a republic as the intended ſubſtitution of our preſent conſtitution,

tion, are desired to examine its evils, to recollect the ineffectual struggles made in the time of Cromwell to establish it in this kingdom, and the glad recall of a government once odiously proscribed. Neither should they be ignorant, that as much of republicanism as can with safety is admitted into our constitution, indeed so much that Montesquieu calls it a disguised republic.

It may be asked—Have you no abuses? We acknowledge many which the lapse of time has brought with it, many which are owing to corrupted morals; but a subversion of government is not the proper mode of correcting them: and, in order to prevent this subversion, two things are necessary to be considered, the time and the means of correcting abuses.

A REFORM, however necessary, however ardently desired, ought to be regulated by circumstances that depend on the temper of the times in which it is to be effected. Above all things a revolution ought studiously to be avoided, a subversion of the ancient constitution under the ostensible pre-

text of amending it's abuſes The irregularities and enormities attending all revolutions, even in times of peace, are ſo ſerious and deſtructive, that all prudent men would exert every nerve to prevent the leaſt approach to a criſis ſo detrimental to private peace and public welfare. It is an earthquake of the ſtate that convulſes every, the moſt remote, part; and the approaches to it are at firſt ſo covered and equivocal as to elude the moſt ſagacious penetration; for what criterion have we to diſtinguiſh the honeſt reformer from the determined ſubvertor? The man who aims at repreſſing exorbitancies from him who wiſhes to annihilate the whole ſyſtem? Not in their efforts. The ſame zeal, the ſame activity, the ſame animation in countenance, in geſture, in ſpeech, characteriſe both. In their ultimate views they differ—in the firſt ſteps their ſentiments and intentions accord; but when the well-meaning reformer has lent his aid in reſtoring the ſprings of government to their full energy, he is alarmed on ſeeing his aſſiſtance given to men who, by artful pretenſions to patriotiſm, had deluded him into meaſures which had nothing leſs in view

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than the deſtruction of the whole machine. His late diſcovery of their intentions, and his repentance of having been inſtrumental in accompliſhing their wiſhes, avail nothing; the miſchief is done, and himſelf involved in the common ruin. When the perſonal deſpotiſm of Charles awakened the ſpirit of liberty, the nobility and gentry who reſiſted oppreſſive meaſures were not aware of the intended ſubverſion of monarchy, which was the conſtant aim of the republican party. The king was precipitated from his throne, and the nobility levelled with the duſt. No conceſſions could appeaſe men who had formed the deſign of erecting a republic on the ruins of a limited monarchy, and, therefore, were not ſatisfied with redreſſing grievances, and raiſing a firm barrier againſt future encroachments. All power is no more than a barrier againſt the fury and violence of men. If this power be overthrown by illegal violence, and a ſubverſion of the civil eſtabliſhment, a road is opened to every lawleſs and unreſtrained indulgence. Whatever the pretence, whatever the object in view, of the leaders in all civil commotions may be, the ſubverſion of legal authority infallibly

ends in the arbitrary dominion of one perſon. The body of the people alſo are very far from reaping thoſe advantages which they are led to expect from a change. The new government, jealous and inſecure, is more arbitrary and more expenſive than the old, the people conſequently are leſs free, and their purſes more drained. Revolution ſucceeding revolution, and faction riſing after faction, amaze and confound the people, who in vain look for the promiſed bleſſings. The principles which were firſt aſſumed as the ground of change are deſerted, and new ones, the offſpring of pride and ambition, lead the ſucceſſive actors to adopt meaſures very incongruous with political happineſs. The ſplendid promiſes by which nations have been tempted to admit anarchy, rapine and carnage, under the ſpecious name of freedom, remind us of thoſe external graces and mental accompliſhments which ſeduced men to receive Pandora with her box, centering in herſelf, as her name imports, every gift which the different deities could beſtow. The box was opened, when out flew the fatal treaſure, diſeaſes, war, famine, peſtilence, diſcord, and every evil to ſcourge and afflict the world; hope

hope alone remained at the bottom, and hope alone remains for that much-to-be-lamented people who find themſelves in the condition of thoſe ſavages who cut down the tree in order to gain the fruit.

The effects which ſpeculative opinions on government have on the lower orders are lamentable, both in reſpect to themſelves and ſociety; they are mere tools in the hands of artful leaders, and though they may tug at the oar, yet the helm is directed by other hands, and the lading is for others. The poor wretches, left a prey to wild paſſions, laviſh their lives for the ſtate and magnificence of ambitious chiefs, reſembling thoſe inſects which die weaving gay habits for the ornament of beings who are of a ſuperior nature to themſelves. Deſtitute of judgment, and unaccuſtomed to the exerciſe of reaſon in matters beyond their comprehenſion, inflamed by prejudice, and impelled by paſſion, like an impetuous torrent, they overwhelm and deſolate all before them. In what manner can ſuch ſpirits be reſtored to calmneſs? The "raging of the ſea and the madneſs of the people" are placed together in the inſpired writings;

writings; no power but that of God can curb their impetuous violence, no voice but his can iſſue the irreſiſtable mandate—"Hitherto ſhalt thou come and no further."

When unnatural conſequence was given the loweſt populace in the time of Cromwell, what unheard-of men ſtarted up—each propoſing his perfect model of regenerating the commonwealth!—Levellers claiming equal diſtribution of power and property—Fifth-monarchy-men requiring the abolition of all human governments, that the reign of ſaints might commence—Antinomians proclaiming the ſuſpenſion of all moral and natural obligations, and the ſuper-eminent power of the internal principle, a principle more perfect, and more excellent, than the beggarly elements of juſtice and humanity; and who can foretel what ſpecies of men might ariſe, or what doctrines be broached, were the bands of ſociety looſed and the hand of authority cut off? Far be it from any man to propagate the deſervedly exploded doctrine of paſſive obedience, or quench the ſacred flame of liberty. Highly inconſiſtent would it be with truth and equity to ſanction injuſtice

tice in the higher powers, or ſuggeſt to evil men, inveſted with authority, arguments for abuſing it. Did corruption ſtalk with unabaſhed front, trampling on expiring liberty, whoever ſhould preſume to oppoſe a ſhield to the ſpear levelled at ſo dire a monſter, would deſervedly be firſt transfixed; but when the ſtate is ſick of no ſuch deadly diſeaſe, the moſt lenient remedies are the moſt ſalutary, and the wiſeſt. Men are no longer to be deceived by ſmiling appearances that conceal the moſt dreadful evils: experience has taught them to anticipate time, and ſtripping off the flower to ſee the thorn that would pierce and wound. There is no need to cite ancient authorities, which, perhaps, would be no difficult matter, as a confirmation of what has been urged. The preſent revolution in France, without entering into the merits or demerits of the ſeveral parties, is a ſpeaking and terrible exemplification of all the enormities and horrid exceſſes that can ariſe from the ſubverſion of eſtabliſhed government.

But, whilſt arranging ourſelves under the banners of the conſtitution, we are prepared againſt

againſt the attack of malignant and deſigning enemies, we may look forward to the time when the abuſes that exiſt may be corrected by means the moſt adequate to accompliſh the wiſhed-for end. For the conſtitution contains in itſelf the principles of reform, and has ſufficient energy to correct its own abuſes. In order to prevent thoſe evils which invariably attend the adoption of improper means for removing grievances, it, with a preſcience truly admirable, has conſtituted the legiſlative aſſembly, conſiſting of king, lords and commons, for this moſt ſalutary purpoſe. To this body we aſcribe political omnipotence—by virtue of which it is enabled to apply to every diſorder its appropriate remedy. It may be objected—this aſſembly is now inadequate to the intended purpoſe, ſince the houſe of commons is a defective repreſentation. The reform muſt firſt begin with the head, ere it can be extended to the members. A very flagrant incongruity appears in boroughs, with ſcarce a ſingle inhabitant, ſending members to parliament; whilſt large and populous towns have no repreſentatives;—and the transferable poſſeſſion of theſe, by individuals, tends to encou-

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rage that ſyſtem of venality and corruption which is ſo inimical to the beſt intereſts of a ſtate: but this is a ſubject which involves extenſive relations, and requires mature deliberation. Theſe boroughs afford an opportunity to men who wiſh to diſplay their abilities and acquired knowledge, to merchants, to the heads of the law, of the army, and navy, of exerting themſelves in defence of their ſeveral rights and intereſts. The neceſſity that the gentlemen of the two laſt profeſſions ſhould conſider themſelves as defenders of the rights of their country, which they are thus intereſted in ſecuring, and not mere ſatellites of an arbitrary power, is too obvious to be inſiſted on. We know the ſhare of abilities to be conſiderably in favour of boroughs: what boroughs, therefore, ſhould be left to anſwer theſe beneficial ends, and what ought to be totally diſfranchiſed, to what towns the right of repreſentation ſhould be extended with the greateſt local and univerſal advantages, are conſiderations too momentous for a ſlight and deſultory review. Some, indeed, there are, whoſe avocations promiſe but little intellectual exertion, who fancy themſelves equal to ſo ardu-

ous a taſk. They wiſh, with Jack Cade, "to dreſs the commonwealth, and turn it, and ſet a new nap upon it."* Theſe are workmen whoſe zeal is not according to knowledge, and whom we cannot compliment ſo far as to ſuppoſe their minds ſufficiently enlarged for the comprehenſion of ſo vaſt a ſubject in all its remote relations. The repreſentatives of the people, intimately connected with them by mutual intereſts, muſt be beſt acquainted, not only with the proper mode, but the proper time, of effecting a reform; and that appears to be the proper time, whenever the body of the nation requires it as a neceſſary meaſure.

The protection which this legiſlative aſſembly extends to the intereſts of religion, has, at various times, been the occaſion of the harſheſt cenſure, and the moſt unqualified reproach. The illiberal and ſevere terms in which it has been reviled, muſt have proceeded from a real or intentional ignorance of the motives by which the legiſlature was led to protect the church: certainly the waters of bitterneſs which have ſprung from this ſource require a corrective. As

* Hen. 6th, Shakeſp.

As the qualities which characteriſe the divine are made the baſis of our government, ſo alſo the revealed will of Him by whom kings reign and princes decree juſtice, ſhould be received with that devout ſubmiſſion which becomes his ſervants. From a deep ſenſe of the advantages derived from that pure religion whoſe light has revived and purified the world, proviſion is made for it's preſervation and communication. Human nature unenlightened is the ſlave of vice. Moral and religious inſtruction, therefore, is the aim of that eſtabliſhment which the civil power has formed in this kingdom.

As Chriſtianity is an hiſtorical religion, containing facts written in a dead language, and alluſions to cuſtoms no longer known, a ſuitable education is neceſſary to clear thoſe obſcurities which muſt unavoidably ariſe from a difference of cuſtoms and manners. To induce men of abilities to attain this knowledge, neceſſary for inculcating religious inſtruction and conducting public worſhip, proviſion is made for the maintenance of a body of men ſelected for this purpoſe at the expence of that community for whoſe ſake

they forego all lucrative civil employments. It is only in the light of diffuſing religious inſtruction that we ought to view an eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment. All political conſiderations, as has been well obſerved, ſuch as an ally, or creature of the ſtate, as ſupporting monarchial in oppoſition to popular government, debaſe its nature. The great founder of Chriſtianity left no rules for the external government of his church, nor his apoſtles after him, conſigning to every ſtate the care of modelling it's eccleſiaſtical in conformity to it's civil polity. On it's admiſſion into this kingdom an arrangement ſimilar to the civil eſtabliſhment took place: different degrees of Clergy were inſtituted, not only as a mean of ſubordination, and a ſtimulus to intellectual exertion, but adapted to every rank and ſtation of life, that each might receive edification ſuited to their ſphere of action. The mode of preſentation alſo and ſubſequent independence of the miniſters of religion are founded on the moſt ſubſtantial reaſons. The election of a pariſh prieſt has been known to divide the inhabitants of a large town into two parties, and even in ſome republics to threaten a ſchiſm and faction

dangerous

dangerous to the exiſtence of the community. A natural bias of ſelf-intereſt has induced the candidates to diſplay too much of the ſpirit of fanaticiſm, that they might the better recommend themſelves to their electors: Thus fanaticiſm, with its peculiar evils, has been indulged and cheriſhed; but England is a ſtranger to theſe evils. The miniſters of her church are neither compelled to deſcend to mean arts, which may ſecure the favour of a mixed and venal multitude, nor tempted by precarious ſubſiſtence on eleemoſynary contributions to accommodate their doctrine to their prejudices. No ſervile dependence on the great, no fear of inſolent directors prevent them from declaring the revealed will of God in ſimplicity and truth. Never can a body of men, ſelected for the ſervice and improvement of a ſtate, obtain or preſerve due influence, except they be individually reſpectable. Abilities, and a ſtrict obſervance of moral duties, although eſſential, are not ſufficient: in civil ſociety they muſt be ſhielded from contempt by a decent and ſuitable proviſion. There is a greater connection between the progreſs of religion and the character of its teachers than ſome reaſoners

ſoners will perhaps allow. We muſt eſteem a phyſician before we can have confidence in his remedies. The advice of thoſe whom we hold in contempt, whatever be the cauſe, is totally diſregarded. The conſtitution, which breathes throughout all its inſtitutions a wiſe and excellent ſpirit, has promoted, in no ſmall degree, the ſpiritual welfare of ſociety, by cloathing the clergy with reſpect, which they may at all times obtain if they be not wanting to themſelves. A learned education, if they will improve and apply it, enables them to recommend themſelves to the laity by all the honeſt arts of converſation; and if eccleſiaſtics impreſs thoſe of the laity who are not very converſant in books of devotion with favourable ideas of their manners, their doctrines will be the better attended to, and the cauſe of religion more advanced. Should their preſence lay ſome reſtraint on prophane and indecent diſcourſe, men of underſtanding will not think converſation leſs lively or leſs pleaſant on that account. The narrow and ſelfiſh views of intereſted men are not competent to comprehend the ſpirit of the Britiſh conſtitution. In theſe days of dark diſputation, rendered ſtill darker by perverſe

perverſe wills and depraved underſtandings, we venture to aſſert that in England, if anywhere, the prediction of the prophet is verified—"Kings ſhall be thy nurſing fathers, and their queens thy nurſing mothers." We, therefore, ſmile at the cenſure of a late reformer, who, declaiming againſt all union of church and ſtate, ſays—"a ſort of mule animal, capable only of deſtroying, and not of breeding up, is produced, called the church eſtabliſhed by law."* It will not ſurely be denied that ſome eſtabliſhment is neceſſary for the purpoſe of communicating religious knowledge, and that the form is in the option of the majority of the nation. And what church ſo much abhors perſecution, or ſo much diſplays the ſpirit of toleration, as that of England? Where can be found a form of worſhip better preſerving a due medium between ſuperſtition and enthuſiaſm? And if any faults appear, how much are wiſe and candid minds inclined to forget them in the contemplation of it's abundant excellencies!

Ubi plura nitent ——— non ego paucis
Offendar maculis.

We

* Rights of Man, page 81.

We have alſo to add, that as the motives which led to an union of church and ſtate were moſt pure, ſo the effects at all times have been moſt beneficial. It was only from their diſunion, and the independent juriſdiction which the clergy claimed, that evils were generated, and evils of the moſt ſerious and fatal kind, ſpiritual pride and ſpiritual tyranny, "capable," indeed, "only of deſtroying, and not of bringing up." We forbear to enumerate the diſmal train of evils which eccleſiaſtics, maſking their ambitious deſigns under the veil of religion, have brought on nations. This very perverſion of religion, when it has ſuited their purpoſe, has been employed as an argument againſt religion itſelf by a certain deſcription of writers, who affect ſingularity of ſentiment rather than with honeſt ardour ſearch after the truth. In the time of our Saxon anceſtors, the union of church and ſtate was preſerved in the diſtribution of juſtice with great advantage to ſociety.* The calamities which, on a diſſolution of this union, aroſe from the ambitious views of the church of Rome, are well known to thoſe who have read the hiſtory

* Black. vol. 3, lib. 3, p. 6, c. 5.

hiſtory of this country. Evils muſt firſt be felt, ere they can be remedied. Public utility alone has occaſioned the interference of the civil magiſtrate in religious concerns, and the reſtraints impoſed never have been levelled at religion, whoſe power is pre-eminent, but it's abuſe.

In a worſhip of "ſpirit and of truth," what human juriſdiction can interpoſe between a man's ſoul and his Creator; or dictate the mode in which he ſhall work out his ſalvation? But in temporals the interference of the civil magiſtrate may be abſolutely requiſite. Should religious principles be wreſted by fanaticiſm to the deſtruction of all civil authority, and trampling under foot the rights of humanity and juſtice, public welfare requires the interpoſition of the civil power, which cannot but ſympathiſe with the cauſe of true religion and virtue: and, although the religion be pure, yet if political principles, hoſtile to the ſubſiſting government, be interwoven in the religious tenets; if the converts ſhew a predilection for a different form of government, and by their conduct, both in public and private, afford juſt ground to ſuſ-

pect they would accompliſh their deſires if poſſible; it will not be denied that defenſive meaſures ought to be adopted: What are moſt expedient the wiſdom of the legiſlature muſt determine. But here we muſt obſerve that ſuch meaſures are not levelled at religion, but political inclinations, of which religion is the badge; for difference in religious opinions can no more authoriſe an excluſion from the power and emolument of civil offices than difference in opinion on any diſputed point of morality, natural philoſophy, or hiſtory. A man is not thus the leſs qualified for ſerving his country in any capacity. Power and confidence can only be withheld from thoſe who afford reaſon to conclude that they would exert it to the ſubverſion of the eſtabliſhed government. Whether the exiſtence of the laws excluding diſſenters from public offices be juſtifiable on theſe grounds muſt be determined by every unprejudiced man, who has an opportunity of examining their conduct. Very few would heſitate in their deciſion on this point; if a juſt and impartial obſervation authoriſed them to conclude that, like the preſbyterians in the time of Charles Iſt, prepoſterouſly uniting

political

political with religious opinions, thoſe of the preſent day would, if armed with power, ruſh forward to ſubvert the preſent mode of government, and erect their own on it's ruins. Perhaps we ought not to omit obſerving, that there are not wanting inſtances of diſſenters who practically evince their conviction of the excellence of the eſtabliſhed religion, by bringing up their ſons as teachers of that mode of worſhip which themſelves, poſſibly from habit, continue externally to diſapprove.

The review we have made will, we truſt, juſtify the concluſion, that our conſtitution is moſt admirable. No florid declamation, no idle panegyric has been indulged, but an attempt made to rouſe the attention of every Engliſhman to a contemplation of the treaſure he poſſeſſes. We are certain ability, we hope virtue, enough exiſts in the country to rectify thoſe abuſes which the lapſe of time and the corruption of morals have introduced. The laws have provided for every thing, they need only execution. Even the pooreſt, ſo much neglected in the boaſted policy of Roman juriſprudence, have their wants humane-

ly ſupplied by excellent regulations, which only require to be put in force. To omit relief of the ſick and impotent, providing work for ſuch who, though able, cannot find employment, the laws ordain a remedy for the complaint which has been lately urged—the diſproportioned price of labour to that of proviſion—by veſting in the juſtices at ſeſſions, or the ſheriff of the county, a power to ſettle their wages. Such rights our laws provide ;* if we have them not, the fault lies at the door of thoſe in whom the power of execution reſides.

They ſecure to us every thing that is valuable in ſociety, every thing that is worth contending for ; they give us the only equality that can make men happy, equality of rights, that of perſons would tend to no good. Many who eagerly wiſh to exerciſe the moſt hated of all tyrannies, that of equals, may regret that men of diſtinguiſhed birth and diſtinguiſhed talents remind them of their ſmall relative importance in the ſcale of ſociety. As for thoſe who are bewildered in viſionary ſchemes of ſpeculative perfection, we recommend

* Black. Vol. I. lib. 1. p. 427.

recommend them to have ſome regard to propriety and the practical impoſſibility of what they deem theoretically true. After due ſtudy, and not till then, let them contemplate the glorious fabric of the Britiſh conſtitution, the work of ſo many ages; whilſt other ſtates have loſt their liberties, and their rights have fallen, this has reared its head, with increaſing ſplendour and majeſtic greatneſs, like a column in the ſolitary waſte, directing the eye of the traveller to the ſpot where true liberty has fixed her reſidence.

Our conſtitution, like a ſhip, to which it has been compared, often has been torn by the fury of the winds, often aſſailed by tumultuous waves, often in the very vortex of deſtruction; but now, with timbers refitted and ſails full flowing, rides triumphant over the billows of the ocean.

May it be perpetual! Let the propitious ſound be echoed from mouth to mouth; never may it be ſaid that Britons refuſe to defend that liberty for which their anceſtors have bled.

FINIS.